DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 409 433 CS 509 522

AUTHOR Dawes, Pamela Anne
TITLE "Scent"sory Perception.
PUB DATE Nov 96
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (82nd, San Diego, CA, November 23-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Higher Education; Instructional Effectiveness; *Interpersonal Communication; Journal Writing; Learning Modalities; Perception Tests; *Perceptual Development; *Sensory Experience; Sensory Training; Student Reaction; Teaching Guides
IDENTIFIERS Odors; *Olfactory Discrimination; *Olfactory Stimuli

ABSTRACT

Olfaction and an individual's perceptions of different scents play an important role in interpersonal communication. People first notice the feeling or emotion they get from a particular odor before thinking of it cognitively, first recognizing whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. The determination of whether a scent is pleasant or unpleasant is based on past experience or perception of that particular scent. An exercise was developed to impress upon students the importance of the olfactory sense. The instructor selects a variety of scents that students cannot quickly recognize and puts the physical ingredients in bags. The bags are passed around the classroom and students then record their responses in a writing journal. Questions to answer may include: (1) How did you feel about this activity? (2) Did any of the scents evoke a powerful feeling, thought, or emotion? (3) What other scents evoke pleasant or unpleasant memories? and (4) What is the significance of your sense of smell to interpersonal communication. (Sample activity directions are attached.) (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 408 650

"SCENT"SORY PERCEPTION

Pamela Anne Dawes
Department of Speech Communication
& Theatre
P. O. Box 9
Murray State University
Murray, KY 42071-0009

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Dawes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Presented to the GIFTS XII Series
Speech Communication Association
Annual Convention
San Diego, CA, November, 1996

CS 509 522

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"SCENT"SORY PERCEPTION

GOALS:

To provide an opportunity for students to understand the importance of olfactics.

To provide an opportunity for students to learn more about themselves and how different scents affect them.

To show the students the role olfactics plays in perception and interpersonal communication.

To be creative and have fun.

CLASS SIZE:

This activity is primarily designed for small to medium size groups. It would be difficult to facilitate the exercise with a class of more than 20 students.

TIME REQUIRED:

20 minutes preparation time (first time only)
15-20 minutes sampling time
10-15 minutes discussion
15 minutes journal entry

MATERIALS:

Materials needed for SCENTsory Perception include: small paper bags, ziplock baggies, paper towels, a marker, rubber bands, and a "collection of scents." The number of paper bags, baggies, and rubber bands should be equal to the number of scents you wish to collect.

RATIONALE:

Olfactics and our perceptions of different scents play an important role in interpersonal communication. Brown University psychologist Trygg Engen states, "smell may be to emotion what sight or hearing is to cognition." People notice first the feeling or emotion they get from a particular odor before thinking of it cognitively (McConnell, 1989). In other words, people first recognize the stimuli by whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. And, what determines whether a scent is pleasant or unpleasant to us. I believe it is based on our past experience, or perception, of that particular scent. Recently, during a discussion in my Interpersonal Communications lab, I noticed that students primarily discussed only the more obvious smells and related emotions connected only the most significant other in their lives. Therefore, I developed this exercise to impress upon students the importance of the olfactory sense. Although I believed this would be an effective exercise, I was surprised and delighted at student responses.

PREPARATION PROCESS:

The instructor should select a variety of scents that students cannot quickly recognize. Several scents can be mixed together to form one non-recognizable scent. Some examples of collectable items include: baby powder, seasonings, coconut oil, cocoa, cooking wine, sulfur from fire crackers, wine vinegar, WD40, teaberry chewing gum, juicyfruit gum, shaving gel, play dough, etc.

To create the scent bags, the instructor should put the physical ingredient in the baggie, making sure to seal it carefully until just before class. Liquid scents are poured onto a paper towel before placing in the baggie. The baggies then go into the small paper bag, which is used so students cannot see what they are smelling; thus, occulesics do not interfere. Then, the paper bags are numbered and the instructor records which numbered bags contains which scent.

Just prior to class time, the instructor should open the baggie inside the paper bag. A rubber band can be placed around the tope of the paper bag loosely. The student can then squeeze the bag lightly to push out air, creating a fanning/bellows effect with the scent. Students must be careful with the aroma bags, keeping them upright to avoid liquid leakage.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE:

To begin the exercise in class, the students pass the bags, smelling each aromatic bag and recording their responses in three categories: a description of the scent (examples: pungent, sharp), the behaviors the scent evokes (examples: amorous, nauseous, happy, sad), and a list of memories or thought brought about by that particular scent (examples: my grandmother during church on Sunday morning, my father are work, my room at home).

After the students have recorded their responses, they are assigned a journal writing. Questions to answer may include: How did you feel about this activity? Did any of the scents evoke a powerful feeling, thought, or reaction? What other scents evoke pleasant or

unpleasant memories for you? What is the significance of you sense of smell to interpersonal communication?

RESULTS OF ACTIVITY:

To give you some idea of the general responses I have received from using this exercise in class, students listed the following as some of the feelings evoked by a particular scent: "fills me with contempt," makes me fell "mellow," "hungry," "sick," "tired," "excited," and "makes me want to go outside." Students also described memories the scents evoked, which included: "local swimming pool," "prayer group at my church back home," "Branson, Missouri," "little kid's dirty faces," "Grandfather's suits," "baseball -- the good wood of a new bat," "my dad fixing my bicycle," "smell of my first kiss," and "elementary school bathrooms." A majority of the students wrote in their journals the importance of the role olfactics plays in nonverbal communication. "Olfactics play an important role in my behavior as probably everyone's," says one student. "It can be a pleasant or unpleasant experience, makes me comfortable or uncomfortable," says another. "I never thought of it until today," said a few students. And, my favorite remark (made by several students) "Olfactics are cool and interesting! This exercise surprised me!"

WORK CITED

McConnell, J. V. (1989). Understanding human behavior. Chicago, Illinois: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.